

# “THIS IS MY SON...LISTEN TO HIM”

Luke 9:28-36

Key Verse: 9:35

**“A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.”**

In the previous passage, Jesus asked his disciples two questions: **“Who do people say I am?”** and **“Who do you say I am?”** In fact, the question of Jesus’ identity was not a new question. For example, after Jesus calmed the stormy sea of Galilee with a rebuke, his disciples asked, **“Who is this? Even the winds and water obey him”** (8:25). When Herod heard about the miracles of Jesus and his disciples he asked, **“Who is this I hear such things about?”** (9:9) In the last passage we heard peoples’ general view of Jesus as a prophet returned to life.

But we have had other testimony to who Jesus is. In 4:34, a demon-possessed man said, **“I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”** Again, the demon-possessed man from Gerasa said in 8:28, **“What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?”** Also, if we go back to the birth of Jesus, an angel announced to Bethlehem shepherds, **“Today...a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord”** (2:11). And to Mary the angel Gabriel said about her baby Jesus to be born, **“He will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end”** (1:32-33). Especially, at the baptism of Jesus, in Luke 3:22, there was a voice from heaven, **“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”** Finally, in the previous passage Peter confessed, **“You are God’s Messiah.”**

The passage before us today is commonly known as The Transfiguration of Jesus. Jesus’ appearance becomes radiant and glorious, two great men of God from ancient times appear and talk with Jesus, and a voice from heaven speaks to Jesus’ three disciples who were there. This is a strange and unusual, even mystical event. But it has deep and profound connections to Jewish history, events and persons. It is also a rare open window and glimpse into heaven and eternity. Let’s learn more about who is Jesus, what he came to do, and what followers of Jesus must do.

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## I. Jesus was transfigured (28-31)

After Peter’s confession that Jesus is God’s Messiah, Jesus made it a teaching moment. Let’s review his teaching briefly. Jesus predicted for the first time his death and resurrection. Jesus said that to be his disciple people must deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow him. Jesus warned that whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but he promised that whoever loses their life for him will save it. Whoever is ashamed of Jesus will be ashamed when he comes in his glory. Jesus ended by saying (27), **“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”**

Now see verse 28. **“About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.”** These three disciples were the same ones who saw Jesus raise Jairus’ daughter to life again (8:51). They seem to be the leaders among the twelve disciples of Jesus. It was a great privilege for them to see and hear what they were about to.

Luke also notes the kind of location and the purpose. It was on a mountain. The gospel writers don’t tell us which mountain, only that it was a mountain. Matthew and Mark tell us that it was a high mountain (Mt 17:1; Mk 9:2). In the Bible, mountains are sometimes the place to meet God. Luke also tells us that Jesus’ purpose was to pray. Luke often notes Jesus’ practice of prayer, especially at important moments. What did Jesus pray? Usually when we pray, we typically ask God for things such as provision, protection or success. Or we pray for others’ well-being. Those are fine to pray for, but I’m pretty sure Jesus wasn’t too concerned about where he was going to get his next meal at the moment. Jesus must’ve prayed to obey his Father God’s will, which was not easy. The highest form of prayer is not asking but surrendering. Surely, Jesus also prayed for his disciples, who were still weak and immature. They still had so much to learn and grow.

Now look at the most mysterious verse in this passage, verse 29: **“As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.”** This is a most unusual passage in the Bible. There are two passages that are somewhat similar. In Exodus chapter 34, whenever Moses spoke with God personally, his face became radiant. The presence of God made him

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radiant. The other person was Stephen. In Acts 7, just before Stephen gave his last speech and then was stoned to death, his face looked like the face of an angel.

Jesus’ face and clothes became bright and shiny like lightning. Revelation 1:14-16 has a similar brilliant description of the Risen Jesus: **“The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”**

When Jesus walked the earth, he looked ordinary. He probably looked tired and exhausted since he worked and served people so tirelessly. To peoples’ eyes, Jesus looked like no one special. He certainly didn’t look like a king or the Son of God. He had no ordinary glow or halo around his head, identifying him as the Messiah. It was his words and deeds of power and love which made him different, not his clothes or hair or possessions. Now, on this mountain, while he was praying, he became glorious even for a short time. This showed his true identity as the beloved and chosen Son of God.

The amazement of this event does not stop there. Look at verses 30-31a. **“Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus...”** This is also very strange. In the Bible, across hundreds of years, to be visited by an angel is very rare. But there is no other account of being visited by people from the past. Yet here, Jesus is visited by Moses and Elijah, and they are in glorious splendor like Jesus. This shows us first of all that there is life after death, glorious splendor for the people of God.

Then why did two glorified men of God from the past appear to Jesus, and why these two men? Who were they? They were two of the greatest historical figures in Jewish history. Moses was the great deliverer of the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Elijah was perhaps the greatest prophet in Israel’s history, who performed miracles and turned his people away from idolatry. Why did they appear?

Verse 31b says, **“They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”** Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus about his departure. The Greek word here for departure is “exodus,” which literally means

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“out-road” or “going out” or “leaving.” Jesus was going to Jerusalem to exit this life by dying on the cross. Jesus was going to leave this world by ascending into heaven. These things would be fulfilled at Jerusalem. To fulfill these things means that they were promised and foretold and in God’s will. Moses represented the Law. Elijah represented the Prophets. Jesus came to fulfill both the Law and the Prophets. Moses and Elijah also suffered much to fulfill God’s will in their own generations. They were persecuted for standing absolutely on God’s side. This caused the ruling authorities and even their own people to be angry with them, since they preferred idols over the true God. Jesus would suffer rejection and death to stand absolutely for God.

Moses and Elijah clearly came for Jesus’ sake, to encourage and strengthen him. His disciples were too weak and immature to encourage or help him. So God sent Moses and Elijah to encourage Jesus to fulfill God’s will to save the world through his Son Jesus Christ by a horrible, unjust death.

What can we learn from this? We learn that to live for God is not easy in this idolatrous world. But it is worth it. Both Jesus and the apostles taught, contrary to the health and wealth gospel, that to live for Christ involves loss and suffering in this world. In the movie, “God’s Not Dead 2”, a high school teacher risks her career and life savings, standing by her conviction to speak the name of Jesus in class. Jesus said that if we want to save our lives in this world, we will lose them. But those who lose their lives in this world for Jesus will gain eternal glory. To live for Jesus is not easy, but the end is glory.

Paul wrote in Romans 8:18, **“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”** Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:13, **“But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”** Jesus said in Matthew 5:11-12, **“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**

So what have you sacrificed for Jesus Christ and his kingdom? Moses gave up the pleasures and treasures of palace life to be mistreated along with the people of God. But he got a much more glorious inheritance.

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## II. The voice from heaven (32-36)

Meanwhile what were the disciples doing? Let's see. Look at verse 32. **“Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.”** “Whoa! John, James, do you see this? Man, how long have we been asleep?” They saw that Moses and Elijah were not there to stay but were rather leaving Jesus. Peter, who usually had something to say, spoke up, **“Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”** Somehow, Peter thought these heavenly visitors might want to stay around for a while. Maybe they could go fishing together. Luke comments that Peter did not know what he was saying. Have you ever done that? Instead of staying silent, you said something that you wish you hadn't said? But it was too late. The words were already out.

Here's where the story gets freaky again. **“While [Peter] was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.”** In the Bible, clouds sometimes represent the presence of God. That's what was happening. Here comes another very rare thing in the Bible: God speaking directly to people.

And it's a fitting key verse for the event. Look at verse 35. **“A voice came from the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.’”** This is almost the exact same words heard at Jesus' baptism, which were: **“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”** Clearly, this is the voice of God the Father, identifying Jesus again as His Son. Jesus is the Son of God. Now we have again God's direct testimony of who Jesus is. God himself testifies who Jesus is. He is the chosen Son of God, chosen to save us from our sins, chosen to rule us with peace and love forever.

Some translations have the phrase “whom I love” instead of “whom I have chosen.” Why is that? It is because some Greek manuscripts have it one way or the other way. But that doesn't matter. Either way, Jesus is God's beloved Son whom he chose to be our Savior and King, to rule all peoples of all nations in heaven.

Why did this voice speak from heaven? Obviously, it was not for Jesus' sake. Jesus was not the one being address by the voice. It was for the three

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disciples’ sake! God was speaking directly to Peter, James and John, especially Peter, since he had a strong habit of speaking up at random.

Peter had many ideas in his head about what he and Jesus were going to do once Jesus became king in Jerusalem. Or so Peter thought. So the voice from heaven said one more thing: “Listen to him.” God was commanding Peter and the others to listen to Jesus. I’m sure this was an answer to Jesus’ prayer for them. Jesus lamented many times that his disciples were so dull and didn’t seem to understand or grasp what he was trying to tell them or teach them.

How about us? As followers of Jesus, are we listening to Jesus? Are we remembering his teachings and his words in our daily lives or in times of difficulty or crisis? In the past six months I’ve been sharply criticized a few times. My initial reaction was to defend or justify myself against the criticism. But God helped me to pray and seek his counsel in His word. In one case I remembered Proverbs 27:6, **“Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.”** In the other case, I remembered an example I needed to follow which I gave in one of my own sermons.

Sometimes when we receive a harsh or critical word, the words replay in our minds and hearts like a movie or audio file. If we don’t bring them to the Lord and resolve them, the words make us bitter and drive a wedge in our relationships with others. I believe this is one of our enemy Satan’s tactics to divide and conquer. This is why it is so important for us to listen to Jesus—to remember and meditate on the word of God.

Most of us with children struggle with how they are growing. At certain ages they are like little angels. We want to raise perfect children, who don’t repeat any of the sins and follies that we did in our lives. But when they get sassy, rebellious attitudes we wonder what we did wrong to let them get that way. Was I too strict? Was I too lenient? Did I not spend enough time with them? We get these accusing voices in our minds. By the way, Satan means “accuser.” In contrast, the Holy Spirit is our Comforter, Helper, Advocate, Counselor. Jesus is our Good Shepherd and his sheep know his voice. Are you listening to the Good Shepherd? Do you hear the comfort, wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit of God? We must listen to Him. We must not listen to vengeful voices from the devil or prideful voices from our own sinful nature.

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Peter didn't always say the wrong thing. Once Jesus taught the crowds saying, **“I am the bread of life....Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day”** (Jn 6:35,54). Then many people couldn't accept Jesus' words and stopped following him. Jesus asked his disciples if they wanted to leave too. Peter spoke up, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God”** (Jn 6:68-69). It was this commitment to the words of Jesus that helped to save and restore Peter after his failure of denying Jesus three times on the night of Jesus' arrest.

We all need such a commitment to Jesus' words. Why? Because we are constantly bombarded by other messages from the world, from the devil and from our own sinful thinking and feeling. We need the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will remind us of Jesus' words and the whole counsel of God in the Bible. Lord, help us to listen to Jesus and your holy word! Help us to comfort and encourage others to hold to your word and promises too.

The passage is almost over, just one more verse 36. **“When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.”** What does it mean that Jesus was alone. This means that the voice was not speaking about Moses or Elijah. The voice was saying that Jesus is the one and only Son of God and there is no other.

The disciples told no one about this. Yet. They did later talk about it. Here's what Peter wrote about this event (2 Peter 1:17-18): **“He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”** What Peter saw and heard that day he never forgot. Neither did John. John wrote (John 1:14b): **“We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

So what have we learned from this Bible passage? Hopefully we have more deeply accepted that Jesus is the unique Son of God, beloved and chosen of God, to deliver and save us. Jesus came to fulfill God's law and prophecies. There is

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suffering to follow and live for Jesus, but it leads to eternal glory. Above all, God wants us not to be led astray by other voices, but to listen to Jesus.